IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) A method of securely conducting a transaction over a network, comprising:

    A. receiving a telephone call over the telephone network that seeks to initiate the transaction with a target;

    B. obtaining at least a telephone number defining the telephone from which the call is being placed;

    C. authenticating the call by checking at least the telephone number associated with the call against telephone numbers in a database of registrants' telephone numbers; and

    D. in response to at least said telephone number matching that of an entity registered in said database, performing instantly the transaction by transferring funds from a first financial account to a second financial account.

2.-3. (CANCELLED)

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 in which said database contains data uniquely identifying call initiators that are registered to undertake transactions on the system.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4 in which a transaction is completed only after authentication of both the call initiator and the target.

6.-7. (CANCELLED)

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which the steps of debiting and crediting said financial accounts in connection with completion of the transaction are performed by the target entity.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which said transaction is completed by the target.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1 which includes the steps of:

(1) obtaining from the call initiator a secondary identifier; and

(2) using said secondary identifier in connection with authenticating the call initiator.

11. (Previously Presented) A method of securely conducting transactions over a network, comprising:

A. receiving, at a second location on a first network, a message placed at a first location on the first network and identifying a transaction to be undertaken;

B. at a second location on the first network, obtaining, from a source other than the initiator of said message, at least a telephone number defining the telephone from which the message was initiated;

C. authenticating the message by checking at least the telephone number associated with the message against telephone numbers in a database of authorized telephone numbers ; and

D. in response to at least said telephone number matching an entity that is contained in said database, instantly completing the transaction by performing a transfer of funds from a first financial account to a second financial account using a second network.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 in which said second location includes a facilitator entity which performs said authentication.

13. (CANCELLED)

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 in which said facilitator completes said transaction only on authorization from the target of said transaction.

15. (Original) The method of claim 12 in which said facilitator transmits authentication to a telephone station at a third location for completion of said transaction.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 in which said message is placed by an entity which initiates a payment to another [[.]]

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 in which said message is placed by an entity to which is a target of payment.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 17 in which said transaction is completed only upon approval by the entity which is to make said payment.

19. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for facilitating transactions initiated over a telephone network, comprising:

A. a data store for storing a database of at least authorized transaction initiators, said database containing, for each entity authorized to instantly engage in said transactions, at least a primary identifier identifying telephone instruments that are authorized for use in said transactions and a secondary identifier;

B. a stored program data processor for processing transactions directed to it, said apparatus being connected to store data in said database and to retrieve it therefrom ;

C. one or more interfaces between said telephone network and said processor for receiving and transmitting data between said network and said processor;

D. said processor programmed to:

12   (1) receive said primary and said secondary identifiers from said telephone

13   network via said one or more interfaces and to authenticate said identifiers against

14   said database; and

15   (2) in response to authentication of said identifiers against said database,

16   performing instantly the transaction by transferring funds from a first account to a

17   second account.

1   20. (Original) Apparatus according to claim 19 in which said processor is programmed

2   to receive said primary and secondary identifiers from different sources.

1   21. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 20 in which said processor is

2   programmed to authenticate said transaction only if said primary and secondary identifi-

3   ers are associated with each other on said database.

1   22. – 50 (Cancelled)

1   51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which said database includes infor-

2   mation concerning one or more desired payment mechanisms, and said payment mecha-

3   nisms are linked to said telephone number.

1   52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which said database includes infor-

2   mation concerning one or more desired payment mechanisms and shipping preferences,

3   and in which said information is retrieved by means of the telephone number and used in

4   processing a transaction.

1   53. (Original) The method of claim 1 which includes the step of verifying to the sender of

2   said call the identity of the designated target before completing said transaction.

54. (Original) The method of claim 53 in which said verification is performed by checking the given telephone number against information obtained from the telephone company.

55. (CANCELLED)

56. (Previously Presented) A method of securely conducting transactions over a network, comprising:

A. initiating, in response to receipt of a text message seeking to initiate a transaction, a telephone call over the telephone network;

B. obtaining from the party to which the text message was initiated, an identifier unique to the party to which the telephone call was directed;

C. communicating said identifier to an entity that is enabled to authenticate the identifier by checking said identifier against a database of authorized users; and

D. if at least said identifier matches that of an entity that is registered in said database, performing instantly the transaction by transferring funds from a first financial account to a second financial account using a second network.

57. (Original) The method of claim 56 in which said identifier is one that has been assigned by said entity to a device on which said call is being made.

58.-61. (CANCELLED)

62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the first financial account is selected from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit card account and a prepaid card account.

63.-67. (CANCELLED)

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein the first financial account is selected from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit card account and a prepaid card account.

69. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the first financial account is selected from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit card account and a prepaid card account.

70. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the telephone network comprises a wireless telephone network.

71.-72. (CANCELLED)

73. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the first financial account is selected from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit card account and a prepaid card account.

74. (Previously Presented)   The method of claim 1 wherein the transaction is cleared through an entity selected from a group consisting of an Electronic Funds Transfer network, a credit card network and an Automated Clearing House network.

75. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the transaction is cleared through an entity selected from a group consisting of an Electronic Funds Transfer network, a credit card network and an Automated Clearing House network.

1 76. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 19 wherein the transaction is cleared

2 through an entity selected from a group consisting of an Electronic Funds Transfer net-

3 work, a credit card network and an Automated Clearing House network.

1 77. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein the transaction is cleared

2 through an entity selected from a group consisting of an Electronic Funds Transfer net-

3 work, a credit card network and an Automated Clearing House network.

1 78. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 the first financial account is selected

2 from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit card account and

3 a prepaid card account.

1 79. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the second financial account is

2 selected from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit card

3 account and a prepaid card account.

1 80. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the second financial account

2 is selected from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit card

3 account and a prepaid card account.

1 81. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the second financial ac-

2 count is selected from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit

3 card account and a prepaid card account.

1 82. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein the second financial account
2 is selected from a group consisting of a bank account, a credit card account, a debit card
3 account and a prepaid card account.

1 83. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the database comprises in-
2 formation concerning one or more desired payment mechanisms and wherein said pay-
3 ment mechanisms are linked to said telephone number.

1 84. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the database comprises in-
2 formation concerning one or more desired payment mechanisms and wherein said infor-
3 mation is retrieved using the telephone for use in processing the transaction.

1 85. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the database comprises in-
2 formation concerning one or more desired payment mechanisms and wherein said pay-
3 ment mechanisms are linked to said telephone number.

1 86. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the database comprises in-
2 formation concerning one or more desired payment mechanisms and wherein said infor-
3 mation is retrieved using the telephone for use in processing the transaction.

1 87. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein the database comprises in-
2 formation concerning one or more desired payment mechanisms and wherein said pay-
3 ment mechanisms are linked to said telephone number.

1 88. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56 wherein the database comprises in-
2 formation concerning one or more desired payment mechanisms and wherein said infor-
3 mation is retrieved using the telephone for use in processing the transaction.